

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES SAFE RECOVERY OF N.C. BILL OF RIGHTS

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today announced the safe recovery of North Carolina's original copy of the Bill of Rights, a document that was stolen in 1865 during the Civil War by a soldier in General Sherman's army. The document is one of 14 original copies of the Bill of Rights that were owned by the 13 original colonies and the federal government. It was recovered yesterday in Philadelphia, PA through a collaborative sting operation involving the FBI and the National Constitutional Center. Easley coordinated recovery of the document with the assistance of the PA Governor's Office, the N.C. Attorney General's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Eastern District Office of North Carolina.

Around 1925, North Carolina's Secretary of History refused to purchase the stolen document and demanded its return. Another offer to purchase the document was made in 1995 and was similarly rejected. The National Constitutional Center in Philadelphia recently received an offer to purchase the document for \$5 million from an unknown seller. The Center subsequently authenticated the document as North Carolina's copy. Gov. Rendell of Pennsylvania advised Gov. Easley in late February regarding the document and the offer to purchase. Easley and his staff then set up a plan to locate and seize the document.

It is expected that the document will be returned to North Carolina in the near future.

"North Carolina's stolen 'Bill of Rights' has been out-of-state for nearly 140 years but never out-of-mind," said Easley. "It is a historic document and its return is a historic occasion. We could not have recovered this without the cooperation of Governor Rendell and federal and state officials in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. We owe them a debt of gratitude. I am confident that, very soon, schoolchildren and citizens across our state will soon be seeing their 'Bill of Rights' on display in North Carolina."

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